

120 S. Riverside Plaza,
Suite 1016
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Tel: (312) 793-8550
Fax: (312) 793-8422
TDD: (312) 793-4170

www.icjia.state.il.us

Prepared by

The Research and
Analysis Unit

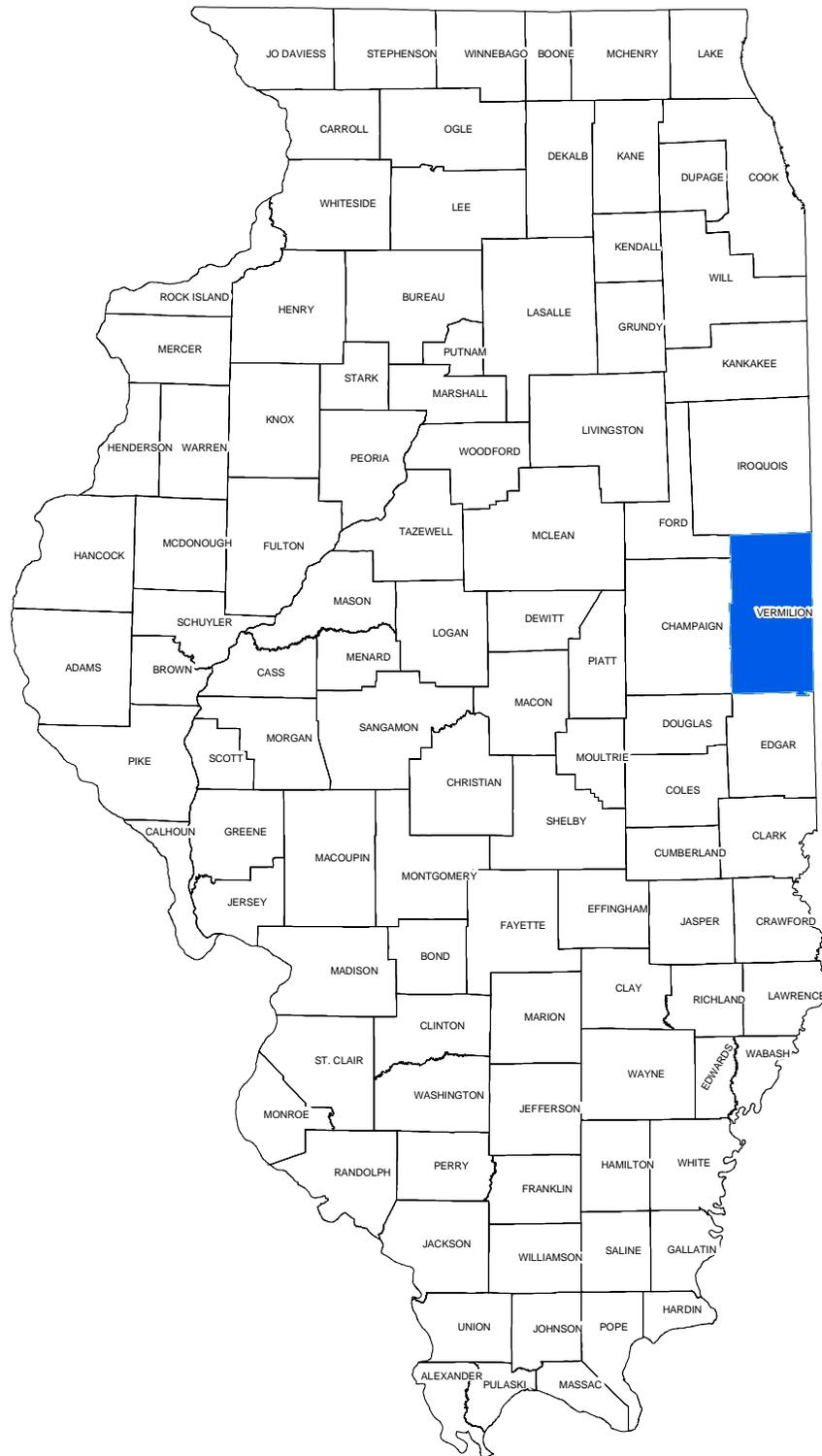
Rod R. Blagojevich
Governor

Sheldon Sorosky
Chairman

Lori G. Levin
Executive Director

March 2004

Assessing Illinois' Metropolitan Enforcement Groups and Task Forces



A Profile of the Vermilion County Metropolitan Enforcement Group

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Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016
Chicago, Illinois 60606-3997
Telephone (312) 793-8550
Telefax (312) 793-8422
TDD: (312) 793-4170
World Wide Website <http://www.icjia.state.il.us>

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Robert Bauer
Gary Kupsak
Kelly Marzano
Thomas Nichol
David Olson
Gerard Ramker
Michelle Repp
Gregory Stevens

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1989, the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit has received funds under the federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 to document the extent and nature of drug and violent crime in Illinois and the criminal justice system's response to these offenses. As a result of these efforts, the Authority has amassed a large amount of data measuring the extent and nature of drug and violent crime in Illinois and the impact these crimes have had on the criminal justice system. In addition, as part of its monitoring and evaluation efforts, the Authority also requires funded programs to submit monthly data reports describing their activities and accomplishments. This profile is intended to provide a general overview of the drug and violent crime problem in the jurisdictions covered by Illinois' MEGs and task forces, and the response to these problems by the units.

Although the data presented in this report are by no means inclusive of all indicators, they do provide a general overview of drug and violent crime and the response and impact of the criminal justice system. The following represent general conclusions that can be made based on the data analyzed for this report.

- In 2002, seven local Illinois police agencies participated in VEMEG (a participating agency is defined as one that contributes either personnel or financial resources to VEMEG). Officers assigned to VEMEG (totaling nine in 2002, six from participating agencies) accounted for two percent of the total number of sworn police officers working for agencies participating in VEMEG (page 1).
- The violent Index offense rate was collectively higher across jurisdictions that participated in VEMEG than among the combined jurisdictions that did not participate in VEMEG (page 3).
- The drug arrest rate was collectively higher in those jurisdictions that participated in VEMEG than in those jurisdictions not participating in VEMEG. The drug arrest rate achieved by VEMEG during the same period was lower than the rates achieved by both participating and non-participating agencies (page 7).
- When comparing the types of drug offenders arrested by those agencies participating in VEMEG, those agencies not participating, and VEMEG, it was found that VEMEG tended to target and arrest more serious drug law violators, specifically violators of the Controlled Substances Act, which tend to be felony-level offenses (page 8).
- The majority of all drug arrests reported by VEMEG, for either violations of the Cannabis Control Act or the Controlled Substances Act, involve drug sale or delivery (page 14).
- Between 1993 and 2002, the amount of cannabis seized by VEMEG decreased, while the amount of cocaine seized increased dramatically (pages 15 and 16).
- Between 1991 and 2002, almost all drug arrests by VEMEG resulted in prosecution. Of those offenders prosecuted, 69 percent were prosecuted for violations of the Controlled Substances Act. In addition, between 1989 and 2002, 73 percent of all drug offenders who were prosecuted as a result of VEMEG activity were convicted (page 17).

- In 2002, among those VEMEG drug offenders convicted and sentenced, probation sentences accounted for the largest proportion (59 percent), followed by prison sentences (41 percent) (page 19).
- Between 1989 and 2002, prison sentences resulting from VEMEG cases accounted for 74 percent of all drug-law violators sent to prison from the region where VEMEG operates (page 20).
- Unlike the arrests made by non-participating agencies, the arrests made by VEMEG and participating agencies tended to involve substances considered to be the most serious (i.e., felony versus misdemeanor) but not the substances for which a large proportion of community residents were seeking and receiving substance abuse treatment in 2002 (page 24).

I. Introduction

The Vermilion County Metropolitan Enforcement Group (VEMEG) covers the Illinois county of Vermilion which had a 2002 total population of 83,142 – 6 percent less than in 1990. In 2002, seven local Illinois police agencies participated in VEMEG. These include the Vermilion County Sheriff's Office and the following municipal police departments: Catlin, Danville, Oakwood, Rankin, Ridge Farm, and Rossville. These agencies accounted for 75 percent of the population in the region covered by VEMEG in 2002 (see Map 1 on page 30). A participating agency is defined as one that contributes either personnel or financial resources to VEMEG.

In addition to agencies that participate in VEMEG, these Illinois counties are served by 11 additional police departments that do not participate in VEMEG. According to the Illinois State Police, county sheriffs and local police departments, in the region covered by VEMEG, combined, employed 122 full-time police officers as of Oct. 31, 2002, 101 of which work in agencies participating in VEMEG. In comparison, there were 11 officers assigned to VEMEG in 2002, including two from participating agencies and two from the Illinois State Police (ISP). Thus, the officers assigned to VEMEG during 2002 accounted for a relatively small proportion— 2 percent—of the total number of sworn police officers working in the participating police departments.

Since 1989, the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit has received funds under the federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 to document the extent and nature of drug and violent crime in Illinois and the criminal justice system's response to these offenses. As a result of these efforts, the Authority has amassed a large amount of data measuring the extent and nature of drug and violent crime in Illinois and the impact these crimes have had on the criminal justice system. In addition, as part of its monitoring and evaluation efforts, the Authority also requires funded programs to submit quarterly data reports describing their activities and accomplishments. To put this information into the hands of Metropolitan Enforcement Group (MEG) and drug task force directors and policy board members, the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit has developed profiles – of which this is one – for each MEG and task force. The profile is intended to provide a general overview of the drug and violent crime problem in the jurisdictions covered by Illinois' MEGs and task forces, and the response to these problems by the units.

In addition to administering federal block-grant funds that come to Illinois for crime control initiatives, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is also responsible for providing policymakers, criminal justice professionals and others with information, tools and technology needed to make effective decisions that improve the quality of criminal justice in Illinois. The Authority provides an objective system-wide forum for identifying critical problems in criminal justice, developing coordinated and cost-effective strategies, and implementing and evaluating solutions to those problems. The specific powers and duties of the Authority are delineated in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Act (Illinois Compiled Statutes, Ch. 20, Sec. 3930). Two of the Authority's many responsibilities are serving as a clearinghouse of information and research on criminal justice and undertaking research studies to improve the administration of criminal justice.

While the data presented in this report are by no means inclusive of all indicators, they do provide a general overview of drug and violent crime and the response and impact of the criminal justice system. In addition, these data are readily available and consistently defined through existing statewide data collection mechanisms. Some data presented in this profile have been analyzed differently than in previous years; therefore, caution must be taken when comparing numbers presented with previous profiles.

While a considerable amount of the information presented in this profile has been provided to the Authority by VEMEG, a number of state agencies have also provided data to the Authority that are included in this report. Specifically, the Illinois State Police, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, the Illinois Department of Human Services' Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services all provided data used to develop this profile. The support and cooperation of these agencies and their staffs have helped make this report an informative and timely source of information on the activities of the criminal justice system in Illinois.

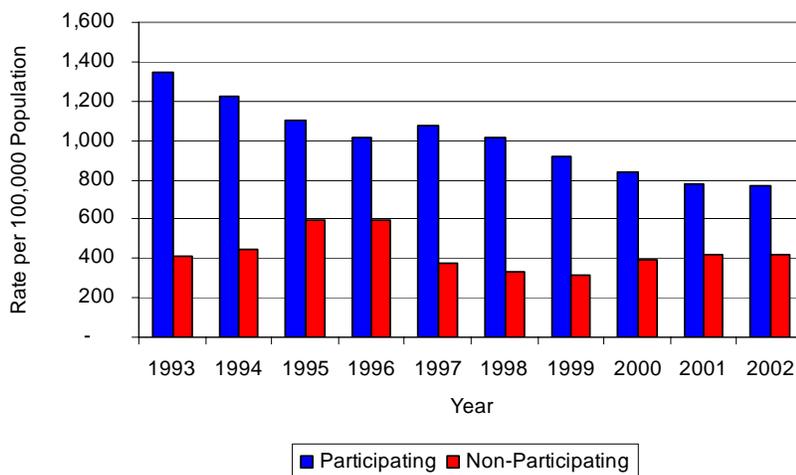
II. Trends in Violent Index Offenses and Arrests

While most of Illinois' Metropolitan Enforcement Groups and drug task forces are primarily involved in drug enforcement activities, it is clear that the relationship between drugs and violence is particularly evident in a number of Illinois communities. In addition, a number of MEGs and task forces have increased their involvement in the investigation of violent crime, particularly that associated with gang activity and violence related to drug distribution, sale and turf battles. One of the most commonly used indicators of the level of crime in a particular jurisdiction is the number of Index offenses reported to the police. In Illinois, as part of the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting (I-UCR) program, every law enforcement agency in the state is required to report crime data monthly to the Illinois State Police (ISP), either directly or through another law enforcement agency, usually the county sheriff's office.. There are eight separate offenses that constitute the Crime Index, including murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault (violent Index offenses), burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson (property Index offenses). Although these eight offenses do not account for all crimes reported to the police, they are considered to be the most serious, frequent, pervasive, and consistently defined by different law enforcement agencies.

In 2002, the number of violent Index offenses reported to the police in the region covered by VEMEG totaled 568, a 42 percent decrease from the 986 offenses reported in 1993. The majority (73 percent) of violent Index offenses reported to the police between 1993 and 2002 were aggravated assaults, while 14 percent were criminal sexual assaults.

During the period analyzed, the violent Index offense rate for the region covered by VEMEG decreased 39 percent, from 1,126 offenses per 100,000 population in 1993 to 683 offenses per 100,000 population in 2002. Similarly, the violent Index offense rate in the participating agencies decreased 43 percent, from 1,346 to 768 offenses per 100,000 population, while the rate in the non-participating agencies slightly increased, from 412 to 417 offenses per 100,000 population (Figure 1). Thus, the violent Index offense rate was collectively higher across the jurisdictions that participated in VEMEG than across those jurisdictions that did not participate in VEMEG.

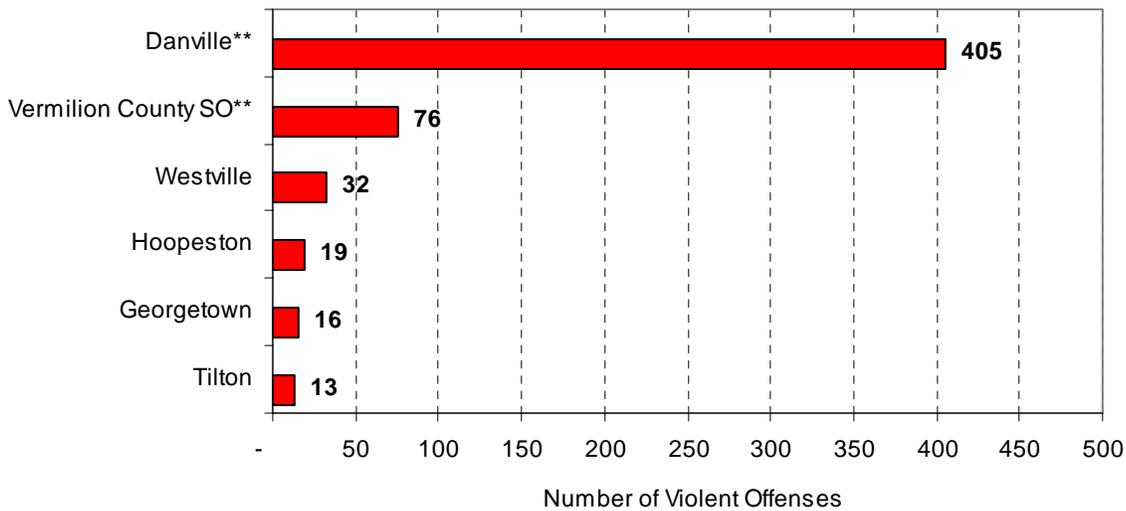
Figure 1
Violent Index Offense Rates for Participating
and Non-participating Agencies in Region Covered
by VEMEG



Source: ICJIA calculations using
Illinois State Police and U.S. Census Bureau data

Across the individual local law enforcement agencies covered by VEMEG’s jurisdiction, two agencies, the Danville Police Department and the Vermilion County Sheriff’s Office accounted for 84 percent of all violent Index offenses reported to the police (Figure 2). Agencies reporting fewer than ten violent Index offenses in 2002 are excluded from Figure 2. When controlling for differences in the populations served by these law enforcement agencies, the violent Index offense *rate* ranged from 49 offenses per 100,000 population in Catlin to 1,213 violent Index offenses per 100,000 population in Danville.

Figure 2
2002 Violent Index Offenses* Reported by
Participating and Non-participating Agencies in
Region Covered by VEMEG



Source: Illinois State Police

*Agencies reporting ten or more violent offenses

**Agencies participating in VEMEG

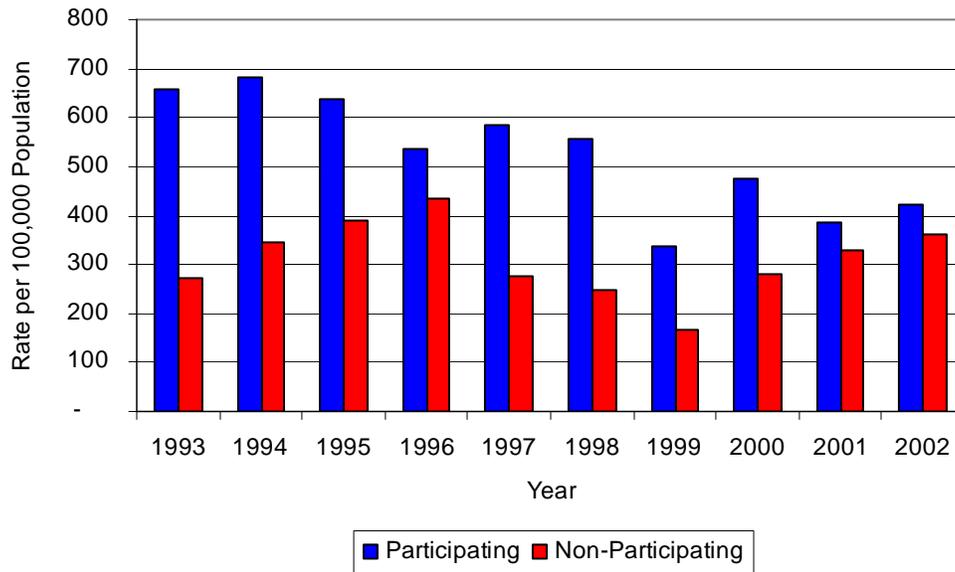
An indicator of the workload that law enforcement agencies place on other components of the justice system is the number of arrests made by police, including those for violent and property Index offenses and drug offenses. Unlike offenses, which are what police must respond to, arrests represent those offenders who may eventually be processed through other components of the justice system, including the courts, county jails, and state and local correctional programs.

Between 1993 and 2002, the number of arrests for violent Index offenses made by law enforcement agencies in the region covered by VEMEG decreased 32 percent, from 496 to 339. As with reported violent Index offenses, the majority (83 percent) of violent Index arrests were for aggravated assaults, while robberies accounted for 9 percent of arrests for violent Index offenses.

During the period analyzed, the violent Index arrest rate for the region covered by VEMEG decreased 28 percent, from 566 offenses per 100,000 population in 1993 to 408 arrests per 100,000 population in 2002. Similarly, the violent Index arrest rate in the participating agencies decreased 36 percent, from 657 to 422 offenses per 100,000 population, while the rate in the non-participating agencies increased 34 percent, from 271 to 362 offenses per 100,000 population (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Violent Index Arrest Rates for Participating and Non-participating Agencies in Region Covered by VEMEG

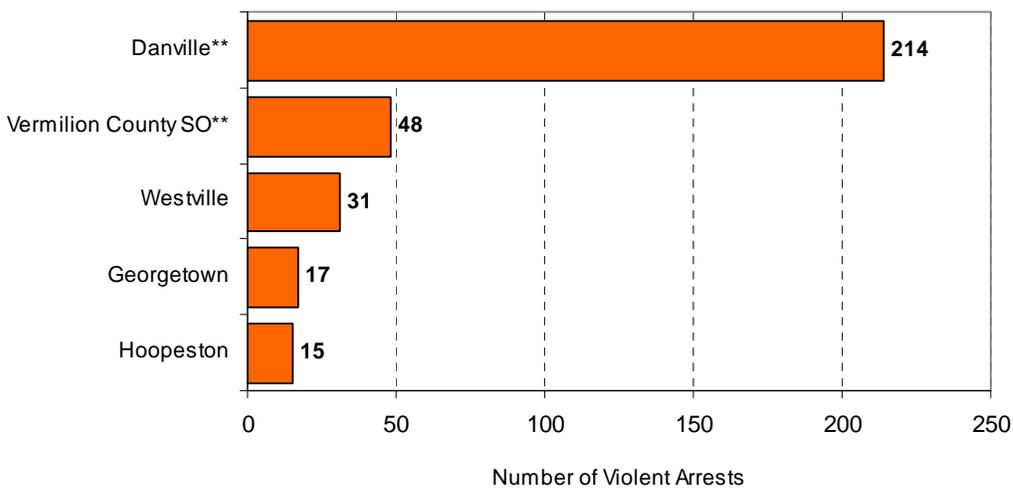


Source: ICJIA calculations using Illinois State Police and U. S. Census Bureau data

Sixty-three percent of the 339 arrests for violent Index offenses occurring in the region covered by VEMEG were made by the Danville Police Department (Figure 4). Agencies reporting fewer than fifteen arrests for violent Index offenses in 2002 are excluded from Figure 4.

Figure 4

2002 Violent Index Arrests* Reported by Participating and Non-participating Agencies in Region Covered by VEMEG



Source: Illinois State Police

*Agencies reporting fifteen or more violent arrests

**Agencies participating in VEMEG

III. Trends in Drug Arrests

There are two sources of drug arrest data presented in this section. One source is the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting (I-UCR) program that includes information submitted by local law enforcement agencies on the number of persons arrested for violations of Illinois' Cannabis Control Act, Controlled Substances Act, Hypodermic Syringes and Needles Act, and Drug Paraphernalia Control Act. In addition, data on drug arrests made by Illinois' MEGs and task forces are reported to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. In some jurisdictions, arrests made by the MEG or task force may be reported by both local law enforcement agencies through the I-UCR and to the Authority by the unit. In other jurisdictions, arrests made by the MEG or task force are only reported to the Authority by the unit. Therefore, in some instances drug arrests may be double counted – included in both local agency statistics reported to I-UCR and those of the MEG or task force. Currently there is no mechanism in place to ensure that drug arrest statistics are not being duplicated at both the local agency and MEG/task force level. This should be kept in mind when interpreting the information presented in the following section.

The majority of drug offenses in Illinois are violations of either the *Cannabis Control Act* – which prohibits the possession, sale and cultivation of marijuana – or the *Controlled Substances Act* – which prohibits the possession, sale, distribution or manufacture of all other illegal drugs, such as cocaine and opiates. Illinois also has various other laws prohibiting other drug-related activity. These include the *Hypodermic Syringes and Needles Act* – which prohibits the possession or sale of hypodermic instruments – and the *Drug Paraphernalia Control Act* – which prohibits the possession, sale or delivery of drug paraphernalia. In general, violations of Illinois Controlled Substances Act are considered to be more serious, since they primarily involve cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and hallucinogens, and are almost all classified under Illinois law as felonies – offenses for which a sentence to prison for one year or more is provided. The majority of cannabis and drug paraphernalia offenses encountered by police, on the other hand, tend to be misdemeanor-level offenses – those offenses for which a sentence to a term of incarceration in other than a prison for less than one year may be imposed.

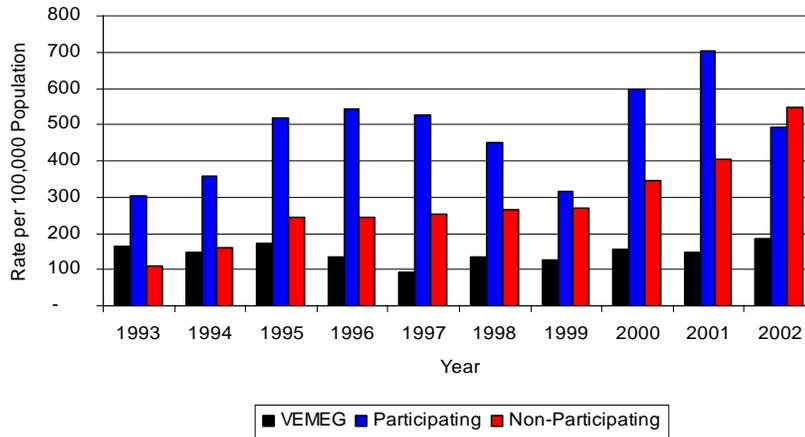
In 2002, local law enforcement agencies in the counties covered by VEMEG reported 498 arrests for drug law violations, more than doubling the total from 1993 (233 arrests). Between 1993 and 2002, arrests for violations of Illinois' Cannabis Control Act out-numbered arrests for violations of the Controlled Substances Act every year analyzed in Vermilion County. During the same period, the number of arrests for violations of the Cannabis Control Act increased 47 percent, from 143 to 210. Arrests for violations of the Controlled Substances Act more than doubled, from 84 to 210. In addition, arrests for violations of the Drug Paraphernalia Control Act, enacted in 1993, increased from 5 in 1993 to 77 in 2002. Much of this increase can be attributed to a 1994 addition to the Drug Paraphernalia Control Act, which included the possession of drug paraphernalia as a violation.

Because arrests for violations of the Drug Paraphernalia Control Act are frequently made in conjunction with other drug offense arrests, these arrests may be double-counted, thus skewing the actual number of drug arrests. Therefore, only arrests for violations of the Cannabis Control Act and Controlled Substances Act will be used for drug arrest comparisons between VEMEG and the participating and non-participating agencies.

During the period analyzed, the drug arrest rate for violations of the Cannabis Control and Controlled Substances Acts combined, in the region covered by VEMEG increased 95 percent, from 259 arrests per 100,000 population in 1993 to 505 arrests per 100,000 population in 2002. Similarly, the drug arrest rate in the participating agencies increased 61 percent, from 305 to 492,

while the drug arrest rate for non-participating agencies increased significantly, from 111 to 546 arrests per 100,000 population. The arrest rate for VEMEG increased 14 percent, from 163 to 186 arrests per 100,000 population (Figure 5). Thus, the drug arrest rate for agencies participating in VEMEG was collectively higher than the drug arrest rate achieved by agencies not participating in VEMEG. In addition, the drug arrest rate achieved by VEMEG was lower than that achieved by agencies participating in VEMEG and this difference became greater in subsequent years.

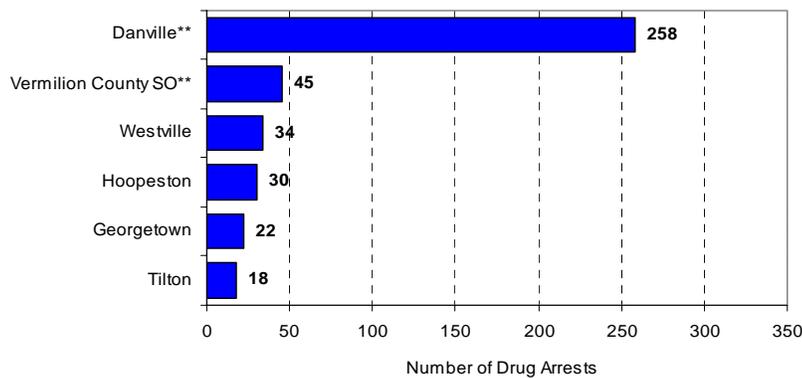
Figure 5
Total Drug Arrest Rates for VEMEG and Participating and Non-participating Agencies in Region Covered by VEMEG



Source: ICJIA calculations using Illinois State Police, VEMEG and U.S. Census Bureau data

Across the local law enforcement agencies in the region covered by VEMEG, the total number of cannabis and controlled substance arrests ranged from zero in nine agencies to 258 in Danville. Of the 420 drug arrests made during 2002 in the region, the Danville Police Department accounted for 57 percent of these drug arrests (Figure 6). Agencies reporting fewer than ten drug arrests in 2002 are excluded from Figure 6. Among those agencies listed in Figure 6, the top two agencies that reported the highest number of drug arrests participated in VEMEG.

Figure 6
2002 Drug Arrests* Reported by Participating and Non-participating Agencies in Region Covered by VEMEG



Source: Illinois State Police

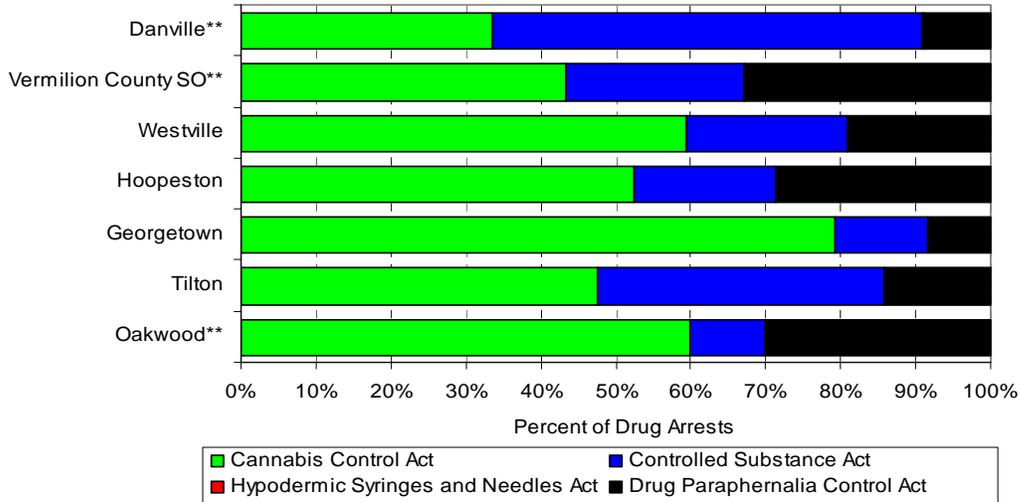
*Agencies reporting 15 or more drug arrests

**Agencies participating in VEMEG

In addition to the dramatic difference in the number of drug arrests made, there are also differences in the types of drug law violation arrests across the agencies in the region. In 2002, violations of the Cannabis Control Act accounted for the majority of arrests across most individual agencies in the region covered by VEMEG (Figure 7). However, for the Danville Police Department, arrests for the violation of the Controlled Substances Act accounted for over 50 percent of all drug arrests.

Figure 7

Total 2002 Drug Arrests* Reported by Participating and Non-participating Agencies in Region Covered by VEMEG, by Drug Type



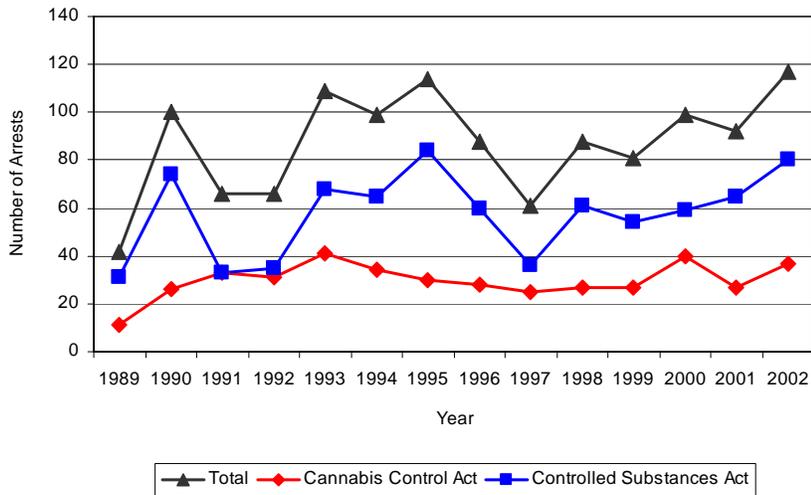
Source: Illinois State Police

*Agencies reporting five or more drug arrests
 **Agencies participating in VEMEG

Between 1993 and 2002, the number of combined cannabis and controlled substances arrests made by VEMEG increased 7 percent, from 109 to 117 (Figure 8). Unlike drug arrests made by most local police departments in the region, violations of the Controlled Substances Act accounted for the majority of drug arrests made by VEMEG throughout all of the period analyzed. During the period analyzed, the number of VEMEG arrests for violations of the Cannabis Control Act decreased 10 percent, from 41 to 37, while arrests for violations of the Controlled Substances Act increased 18 percent, from 68 to 80 (Figure 8).

Between 1993 and 2002, the proportion of drug arrests accounted for by controlled substance violations increased for participating, from 39 percent in 1993 to 58 percent in 2002, and increased for non-participating agencies, from 17 percent in 1993 to 27 percent in 2002. On the other hand, for VEMEG, the proportion of drug arrests accounted for by controlled substance violations increased 10 percent between 1993 and 2002, from 62 percent in 1993 to 68 percent in 2002. Based on these data, it can be inferred that arrests by VEMEG were more likely than arrests by either participating or non-participating agencies to involve violations of the Illinois' Controlled Substances Act, as opposed to the Cannabis Control Act. One interpretation of this pattern is that VEMEG is more focused in who they are targeting and arresting than local departments, and are also getting a more serious drug law violator, since violations of the Controlled Substances Act are more likely to involve felony-level offense.

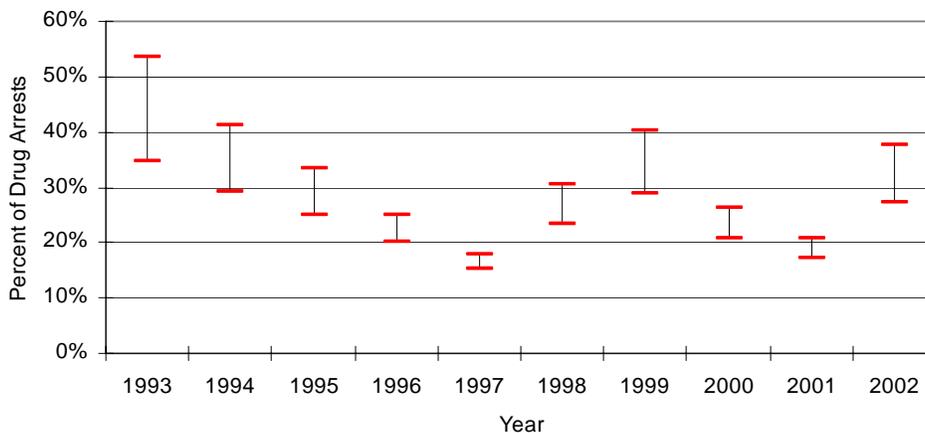
Figure 8
Drug Arrests by VEMEG



Source: VEMEG

The data presented below represent the percent of total drug arrests made by participating agencies accounted for by VEMEG. An upper and lower bound is shown in Figure 9, which accounts for whether or not the units numbers are counted as part of the UCR submissions made by participating departments (which is unknown at this point). The upper bound indicates the percentage of arrests if *all* of the VEMEG arrests are included in the local UCR submissions. The lower bound indicates the percentage if *none* of the VEMEG arrests are included in the local UCR submissions. It is estimated that the proportion of all drug arrests across participating agencies accounted for by VEMEG, was between 35 to 53 percent in 1993, but decreased to between 27 to 38 percent in 2002. Thus, despite the fact that the officers assigned to VEMEG accounted for a small proportion of the total number of officers in participating agencies, they accounted for a moderate proportion of the drug arrests in the region between 1993 and 2002.

Figure 9
Percent of Total Drug Arrests
Accounted for by VEMEG



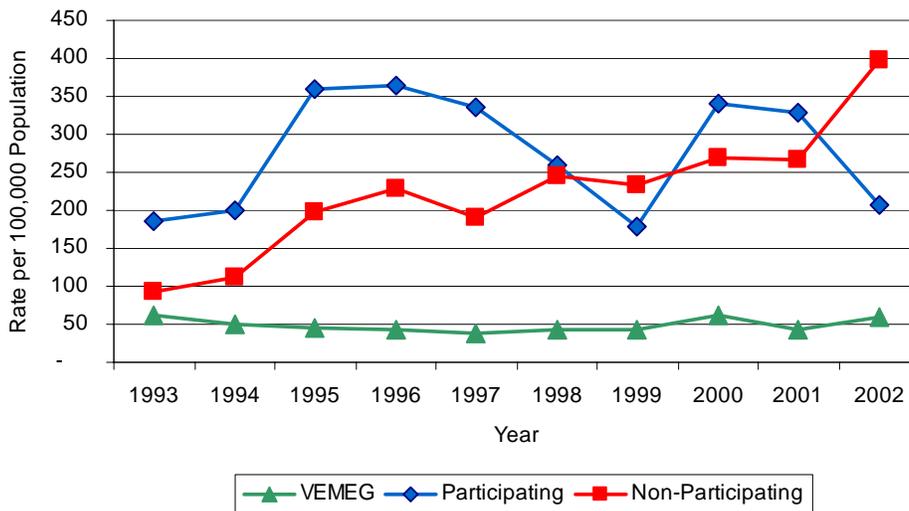
Source: ICJIA calculations using
Illinois State Police and VEMEG

The number of arrests for violations of Illinois' Cannabis Control Act in Vermilion County totaled 210 in 2002, 47 percent more than the 143 arrests made for cannabis violations in 1993. Between 1993 and 2002, the proportion of all drug arrests accounted for by violations of the Cannabis Control Act in the region decreased 21 percent, from 63 percent to 50 percent. In 2002, agencies participating in VEMEG accounted for the largest portion (62 percent) of the total number of arrests for cannabis violations between 1993 and 2002. VEMEG reported a total of 37 arrests for cannabis violations in 2002, 32 percent of the unit's drug arrests.

During the period analyzed, the cannabis arrest rate for the region covered by VEMEG increased 55 percent, from 163 arrests per 100,000 population in 1993 to 253 arrests per 100,000 population in 2002. The cannabis arrest rate in the participating agencies increased 11 percent, from 185 to 206 arrests per 100,000 population, while the arrest rate in the non-participating agencies increased significantly, from 92 to 397 arrests per 100,000 population. The cannabis arrest rate for VEMEG, on the other hand, decreased 4 percent, from 61 to 59 arrests per 100,000 population (Figure 10). Thus, the arrest rate for violations of the Cannabis Control Act was collectively higher in the area served by participating agencies than in the combined jurisdictions of the non-participating agencies.

Figure 10

Cannabis Arrests Rates in the Region Covered by VEMEG as Reported by Participating Agencies, Non-participating Agencies, and VEMEG

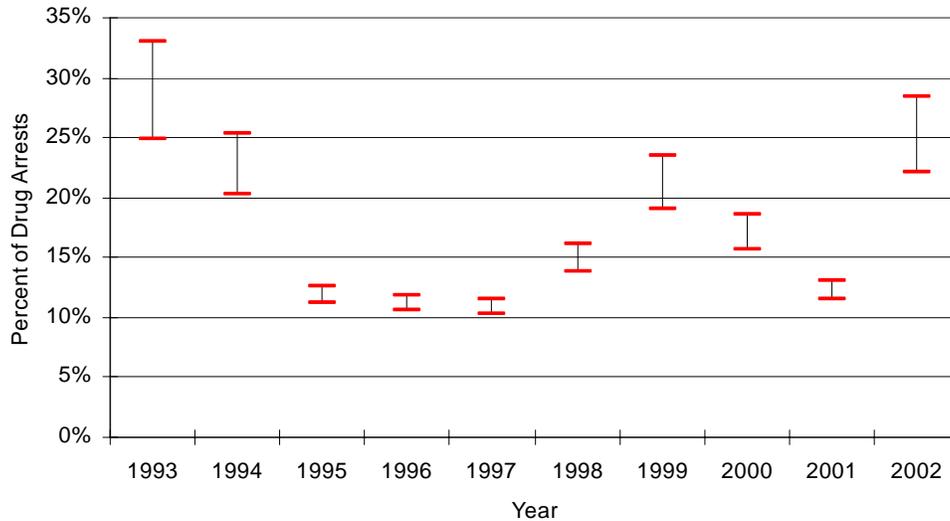


Source: ICJIA calculations using Illinois State Police, U.S. Census Bureau, and VEMEG data

The data presented in Figure 11 represent the percent of cannabis arrests made by participating agencies accounted for by VEMEG. An upper and lower bound is shown, which accounts for whether or not the unit's numbers are counted as part of the UCR submissions made by participating departments (which is unknown at this point). The upper bound indicates the percentage of arrests if *all* of the VEMEG arrests are included in the local UCR submissions. The lower bound indicates the percentage if *none* of the VEMEG arrests are included in the local UCR submissions.

It is estimated that the proportion of cannabis arrests across the participating agencies accounted for by VEMEG was between 25 to 33 percent in 1993, but decreased to between 22 to 28 percent in 2002. The data suggest that although arrests for the violation of the Cannabis Control Act made by VEMEG in 1993 represented a moderate proportion of such arrests made in the jurisdictions of participating agencies, this proportion decreased. It is important to note, however, that there has been an upward trend since the mid-1990s.

Figure 11
Percent of Cannabis Arrests
Accounted for by VEMEG



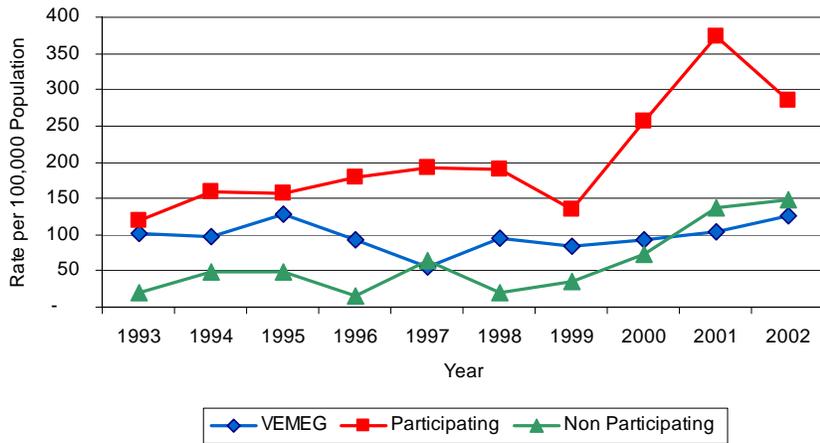
Source: ICJIA calculations using Illinois State Police and VEMEG data

In Vermilion County, the number of arrests for violations of Illinois’ Controlled Substances Act nearly tripled between 1993 and 2002, from 84 to 210. Between 1993 and 2002, the proportion of all drug arrests accounted for by violations of the Controlled Substances Act in the region increased from 37 percent to 50 percent. In 2002, VEMEG reported 80 arrests for controlled substance violations, 68 percent of all drug arrests reported to the Authority by the unit.

Between 1993 and 2002, the arrest rate for Controlled Substances Act violations for the region covered by VEMEG nearly tripled, from 96 to 253 arrests per 100,000 population (Figure 12). The controlled substances arrest rate in the participating agencies more than doubled, from 120 to 286 arrests per 100,000 population, while the arrest rate in the non-participating agencies increased significantly, from 19 to 149 arrests per 100,000 population. The controlled substances arrest rate for VEMEG increased 25 percent, from 102 to 127 arrests per 100,000 population (Figure 12). Thus, the arrest rate for violations of the Controlled Substances Act for participating agencies was collectively lower than the arrest rate for non-participating agencies.

Figure 12

Controlled Substances Arrest Rates in the Region Covered by VEMEG as Reported by Participating Agencies, Non-participating Agencies, and VEMEG

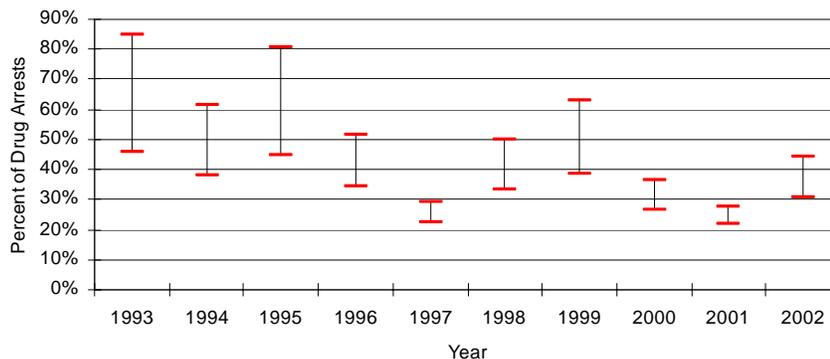


Source: ICJIA calculations using Illinois State Police, U.S. Census Bureau, and VEMEG data

The data presented in Figure 13 represent the percent of controlled substance arrests made by participating agencies accounted for by VEMEG. An upper and lower bound is shown which accounts for whether or not the unit's numbers are counted as part of the UCR submissions made by participating departments (which is unknown at this point). The upper bound indicates the percentage of arrests if *all* of the VEMEG arrests are included in the local UCR submissions. The lower bound indicates the percentage if *none* of the VEMEG arrests are included in the local UCR submissions. It is estimated that the proportion of controlled substances arrests across the participating agencies accounted for by VEMEG, was between 46 to 85 percent in 1993, but decreased to between 22 to 28 percent in 2002. Arrests made by VEMEG for violations of the Controlled Substances Act represented a large proportion of similar arrests made in the jurisdictions of the participating agencies, even though VEMEG had relatively few officers assigned to the task force. When examining the three figures together (Figure 9, 11, and 13), the data suggest that VEMEG focused on arresting individuals violating the Controlled Substances Act, most of which are felony offenses

Figure 13

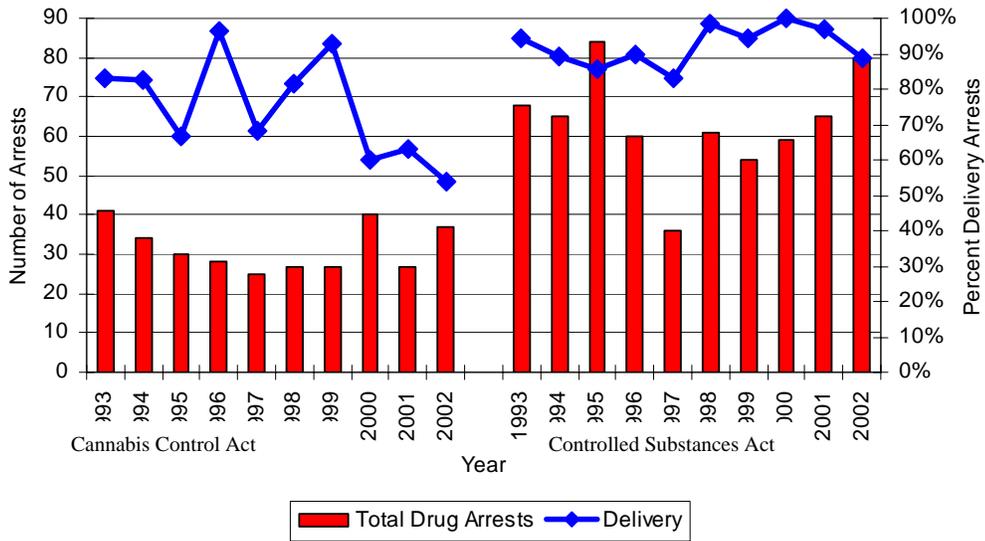
Percent of Controlled Substances Arrests Accounted for by VEMEG



Source: ICJIA calculations using Illinois State Police and VEMEG data

The majority of all drug arrests reported by VEMEG are for delivery. Between 1993 and 2002, the number of drug delivery arrests made by VEMEG decreased from 98 to 91. Arrests for drug delivery accounted for 88 percent of all drug arrests made by VEMEG between 1993 and 2002. When cannabis and controlled substance arrests were examined separately, arrests for delivery of controlled substances accounted for 92 percent of the total number of arrests made for violations of the Controlled Substance Act, whereas, arrests for the delivery of cannabis accounted for 75 percent of all arrests for violations of the Cannabis Act.

Figure 14
VEMEG Drug Arrests for Possession versus Delivery,
by Drug Type



Source: ICJIA calculations using VEMEG data

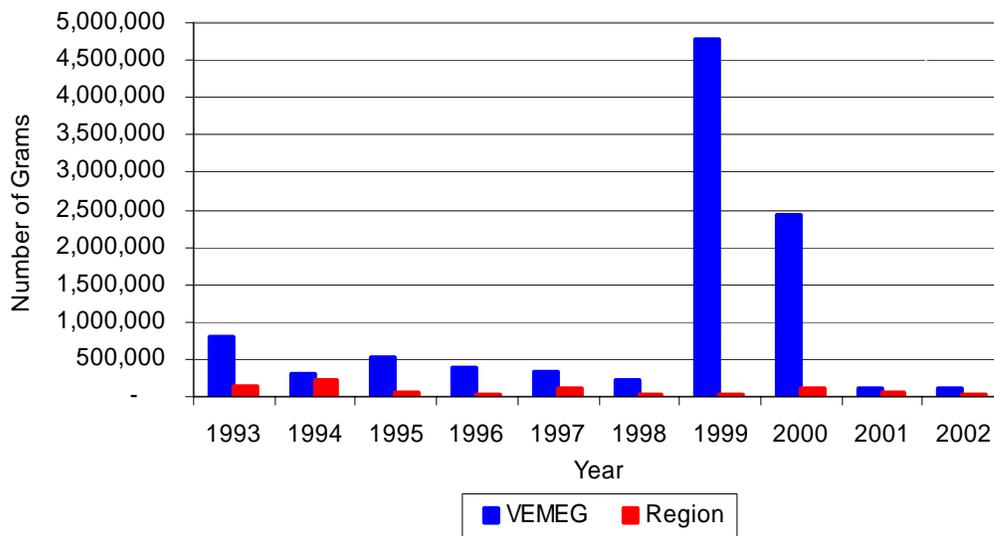
IV. Trends in Drug Seizures

Drugs seized by law enforcement agencies are another indicator of the extent and nature of illegal drug trade in a jurisdiction. When illegal drugs are seized by law enforcement agencies, all or a portion of the total amount seized is submitted to a crime lab for analysis. Most agencies submit drugs to one of the Illinois State Police crime labs. These labs record the quantity of drugs submitted from each county. This section discusses trends in the quantities of illegal drugs seized and submitted to the Illinois State Police from local law enforcement agencies in Vermilion County as well as the quantities of drugs seized by VEMEG. It is important to note, however, that while VEMEG data report the total quantities of drugs actually *seized*, local agency data only represent the quantities of seized drugs that are *submitted* to the Illinois State Police for analysis. County-level cannabis, cocaine, crack, methamphetamine, and heroin seizure rates for Illinois' 102 counties are provided in maps located in the Appendix of this report.

As in most Illinois jurisdictions, cannabis accounts for the majority of illegal drugs seized in the region covered by VEMEG. The quantity of cannabis seized and submitted by law enforcement agencies in Vermilion County decreased 85 percent, from 142,215 grams in 1993 to 21,182 grams in 2002, with 63,465 grams being seized in 1994, the largest amount seized during the period analyzed. Similarly, the quantity of cannabis seized by VEMEG decreased 85 percent between 1993 and 2002, from 793,498 grams to 117,725 grams, despite a significant increase to 4,789,889 grams in 1999 (Figure 15). In 2002, VEMEG's cannabis seizure rate of 186,895 grams per 100,000 population was significantly higher than the statewide cannabis seizure rate of 19,621 grams per 100,000 population and the seizure rate of 25,242 grams per 100,000 population in the region covered by VEMEG (Map 2).

Figure 15

Cannabis Seized and Submitted to ISP by Vermilion County and Seized by VEMEG



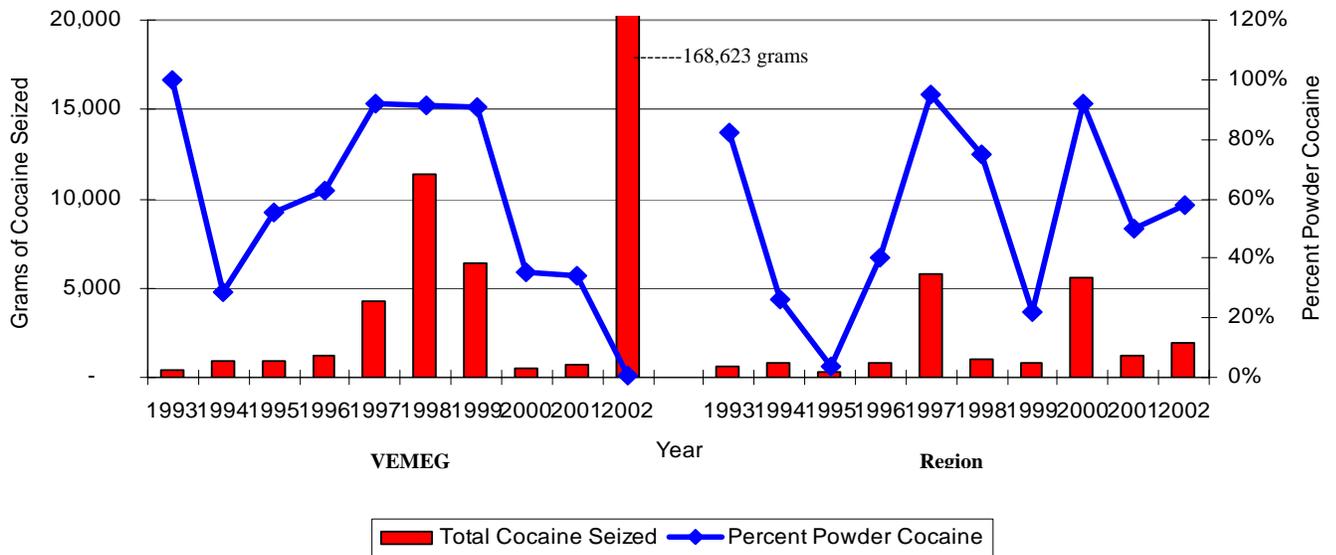
Source: Illinois State Police and VEMEG

Between 1993 and 2002, a combination of crack and powder cocaine has accounted for a small proportion of drugs seized in the region covered by VEMEG. However, the quantity of cocaine seized and submitted by law enforcement agencies in Vermilion County nearly tripled, from 636 grams in 1993 to 1,888 grams in 2002. Between 1993 and 2002, the quantity of cocaine seized by VEMEG increased dramatically, from 408 grams to 168,623 grams.

During the years analyzed, the proportion of all cocaine seized accounted for by powder cocaine varied in the region covered by VEMEG and for VEMEG. Although in 1993, the proportion of all cocaine seized accounted for by powder cocaine was 82 percent of the cocaine seized in the region, this number dropped to 58 percent in 2002. For VEMEG, between 1993 and 1999 the proportion of powdered cocaine of all cocaine seized dropped from 100 percent in 1993 to 1 percent in 2002 (Figure 16). However, in 1994, the proportion of all cocaine seized accounted for by powder cocaine was only 29 percent, and did not reach 90 percent until 1997. In 2002, VEMEG's cocaine seizure rate of 267,697 grams per 100,000 population was 12 times greater than the statewide cocaine seizure rate of 22,099 grams per 100,000 population and significantly higher than the cocaine seizure rate of 2,250 grams per 100,000 population in the region covered by VEMEG (Maps 3 and 4).

Figure 16

Powder and Crack Cocaine Seized and Submitted to ISP by Vermilion County and Seized by VEMEG



Source: Illinois State Police and VEMEG

The total quantity of illegal drugs seized and submitted by law enforcement agencies in Vermilion County decreased 84 percent between 1993 and 2002, from 142,856 grams to 23,482 grams. Also, the total quantity of illegal drugs seized by VEMEG decreased 64 percent, from 793,945 grams in 1993 to 286,470 grams in 2002.

Between 1994 and 1998, VEMEG reported no methamphetamine seizures, however, since then, 344 grams of methamphetamine have been seized. In the region covered by VEMEG, between 1994 and 2002, 394 grams of methamphetamine were seized. In 2002, the seizure rate for VEMEG was 156 grams per 100,000 population, lower than the statewide seizure rate of 224 grams per 100,000 population, as well as the seizure rate of 290 grams per 100,000 population for Vermilion County (Map 5).

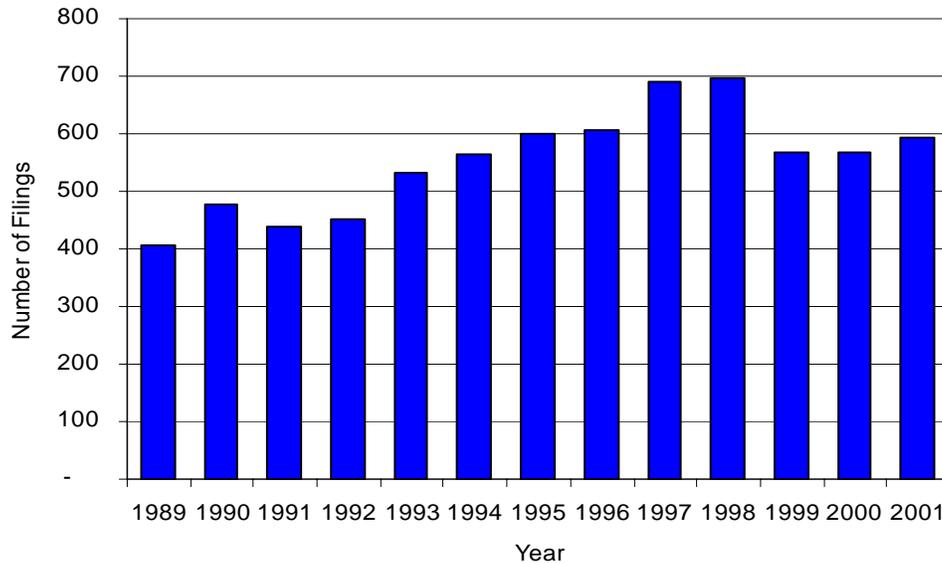
V. Trends in Prosecutions for Drug Offenses and All Felonies

Although Illinois has one of the best court reporting systems in the country, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Court only collects information regarding the aggregate number of court filings. Currently, there are no statewide data available on court filings by offense type. The Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts reports data on felony criminal court cases. After screening a case and deciding it warrants further action, the state's attorney must file formal charges in court. Felony cases can be punished by a probation term up to four years and incarceration for more than one year.

Between 1989 and 2001, the number of felony filings in the region covered by VEMEG increased 46 percent, from 407 to 593 (Figure 17).

Figure 17

Number of Felony Filings in Vermilion County

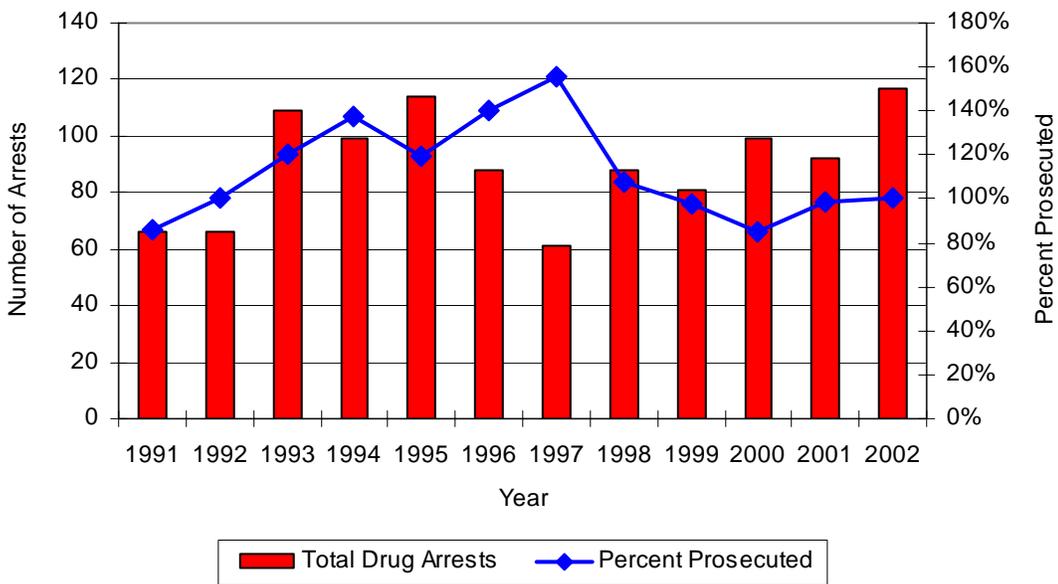


Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Between 1991 and 2002, there were a total of 1,210 drug prosecutions initiated as a result of VEMEG arrests in Vermilion County. During this time, the number of VEMEG drug arrests varied by year; however, the number of arrests increased 77 percent, from 66 arrests in 1991 to 117 arrests in 2002 (Figure 18). Between 1991 and 2002, nearly all of drug arrests by VEMEG resulted in prosecution. Sixty-nine percent of VEMEG drug offender prosecutions during this period were for violations of the Controlled Substance Act. In some years, the proportion of arrests resulting in a prosecution exceeded 100 percent. This may be due to some differences in the timing of an arrest and the filings of charges, or could be due to the number of charges, rather than the number of defendants being reported by the unit. In addition, some offenders have charges filed, and a subsequent warrant issued, without an arrest taking place, which could also affect the number of prosecutions reported.

Figure 18

Total VEMEG Drug Arrests and Percentage of Arrests Resulting in Prosecution



Source: VEMEG

Between 1991 and 2002, 66 percent (800) of the 1,210 drug offenders who were prosecuted as a result of VEMEG activity were convicted. Convictions for controlled substances accounted for 69 percent of all VEMEG initiated convictions during the period analyzed.

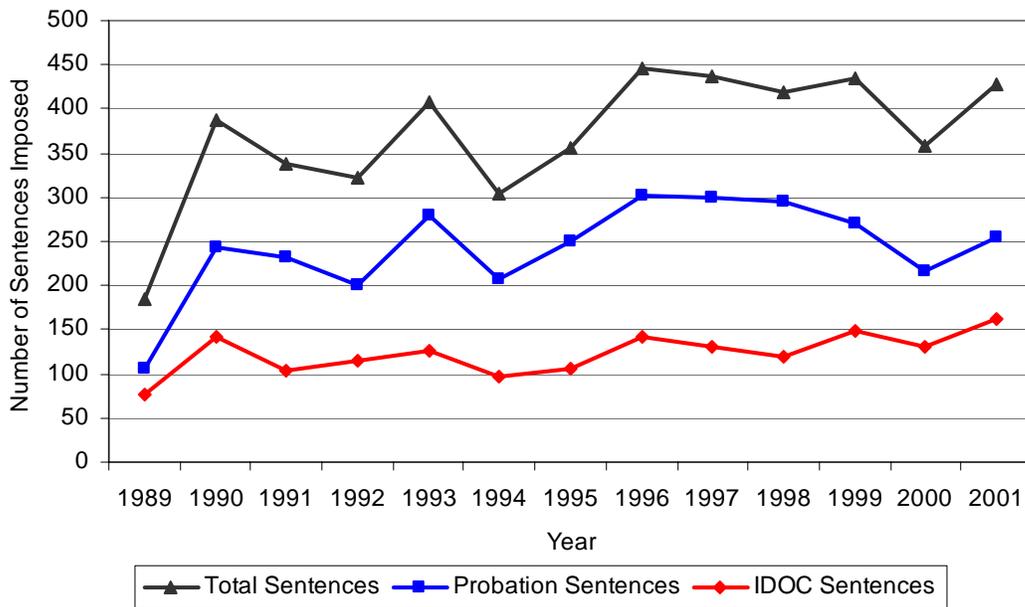
VI. Trends in Percent of Convicted Drug Offenders Sentenced to Prison

Under Illinois law, those convicted of most Class 1, 2, 3, and 4 felonies can be sentenced to probation or prison; the two most commonly used sentencing options. However, there are some exceptions. For example, those convicted of possessing 15 grams or more of cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamine are guilty of a Class 1 felony, but cannot be sentenced to probation. Such instances, as well as for all Class X felonies (e.g., sale/distribution of 15 grams or more of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine), must result in a sentence to prison and cannot be sentenced to probation. Where a sentence to probation or prison is an option, a number of factors may influence the type and length of sentence imposed, including the severity of the crime, the offender's criminal and social history, and the safety of the community.

Between 1989 and 2001, the number of offenders convicted of a felony and sentenced in the region covered by VEMEG more than doubled, from 184 to 429. Although the number of convicted felons sentenced to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) also doubled between 1989 and 2001, from 76 to 162; the proportion of felons sentenced to IDOC remained relatively stable during the same period. In 2001, 255 probation sentences were imposed on convicted felons, more than double the number of probation sentences in 1989 (Figure 19). As a result, the proportion of felons sentenced to probation increased three percent from 58 percent in 1989 to 59 percent in 2001. Sentences other than prison or probation account for the remaining 3 percent of felony sentences imposed in 2001.

Figure 19

Sentences Imposed on Felons Convicted in Vermilion County

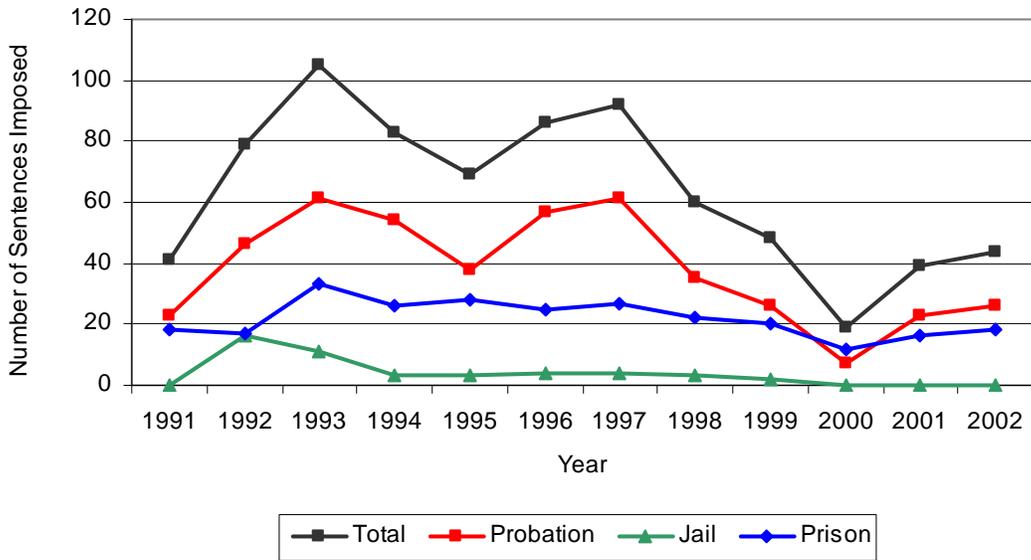


Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Between 1991 and 2002, the number of VEMEG drug offenders convicted and sentenced increased slightly from 41 to 44; however in 1993, the number of felons sentenced rose to 105 offenders sentenced. During the period analyzed, the number of convicted VEMEG drug offenders sentenced to probation increased from 23 in 1991 to 26 in 2002, although in 1993 and 1997, the number of convicted VEMEG drug offenders sentenced to probation reached a period high of 61. Also, the number of convicted VEMEG drug offenders sentenced to jail remained at zero, while the number of drug offenders sentenced to prison remained at 18 (Figure 20). In 2002, among those VEMEG drug offenders convicted and sentenced, probation sentences accounted for the largest proportion (59 percent), followed by prison sentences (41 percent).

Figure 20

Sentences Imposed on Convicted VEMEG Drug Offenders

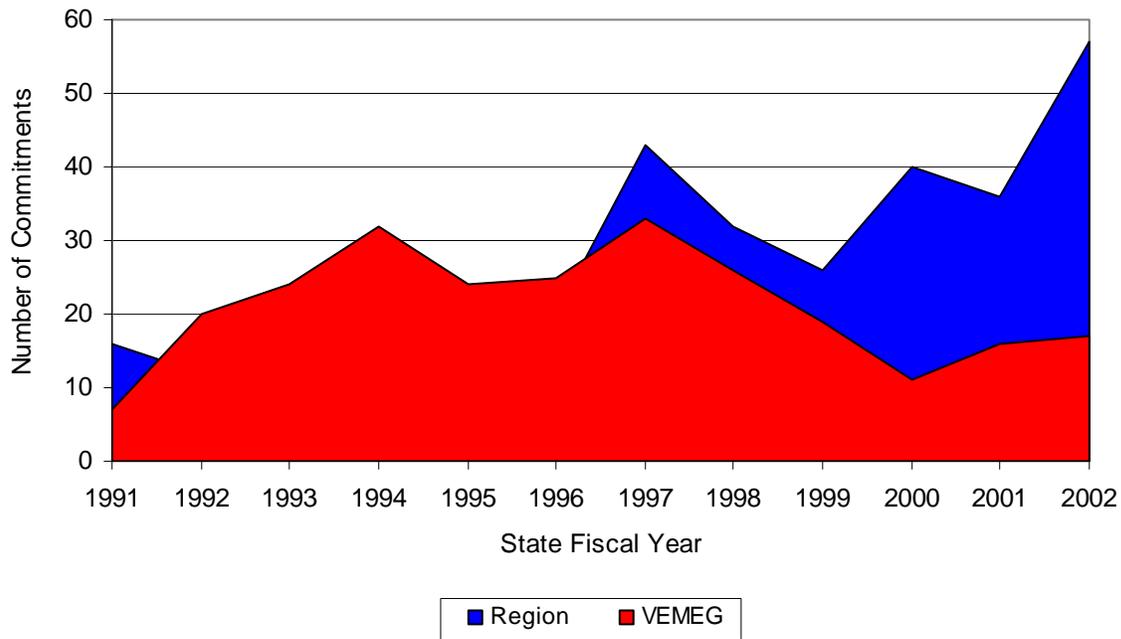


Source: VEMEG

Between state fiscal years¹ 1989 and 2002, the number of new court commitments to IDOC's Adult Division for drug offenses from the region covered by VEMEG significantly increased, from 16 to 57. The number of drug offender admissions by VEMEG also increased from seven to 17 between 1991 and 2002 (Figure 21). Thus, during the period analyzed, prison sentences resulting from VEMEG cases accounted for 74 percent of all drug-law violators sentenced to prison from the region where VEMEG operates.

Figure 21

Number of Drug Offenders Committed to IDOC by VEMEG and Region Covered by VEMEG



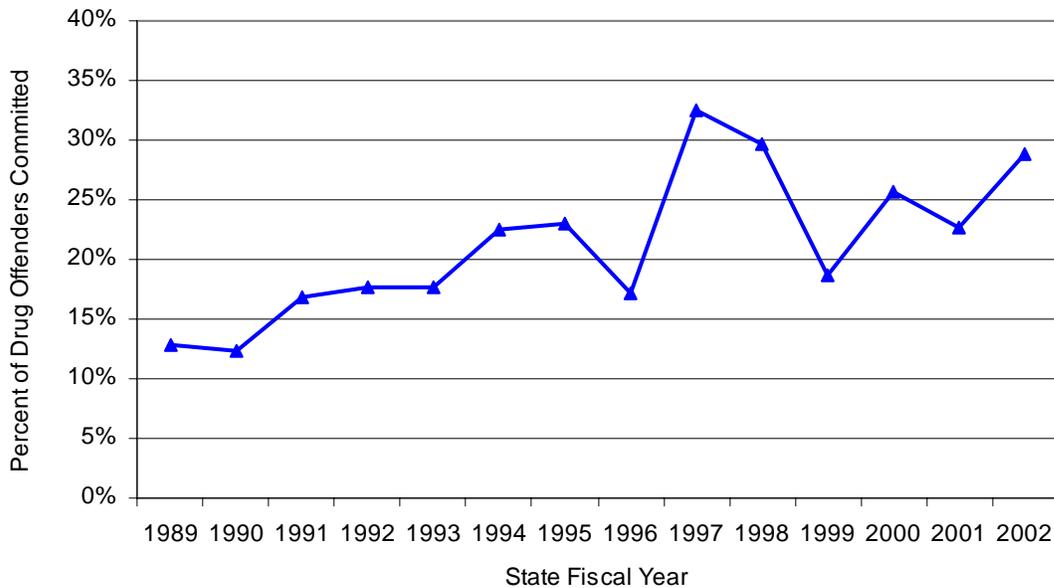
Source: Illinois Department of Corrections and VEMEG

¹ Some state data are collected according to State Fiscal Year (SFY) instead of calendar year. SFYs begin on July 1st and end the following June 30th, and are named according to the calendar year between January and June, e.g. state fiscal year 1991 was from July 1st, 1990 to June 30th, 1991.

During the period analyzed, drug offenders accounted for an increasing proportion of adults convicted and sentenced to prison from Vermilion County. In 1989, drug offenses accounted for 13 percent of all commitments to IDOC, compared to 29 percent in 2002 (Figure 22).

Figure 22

Percent of Drug Offenders Committed to IDOC in Vermilion County

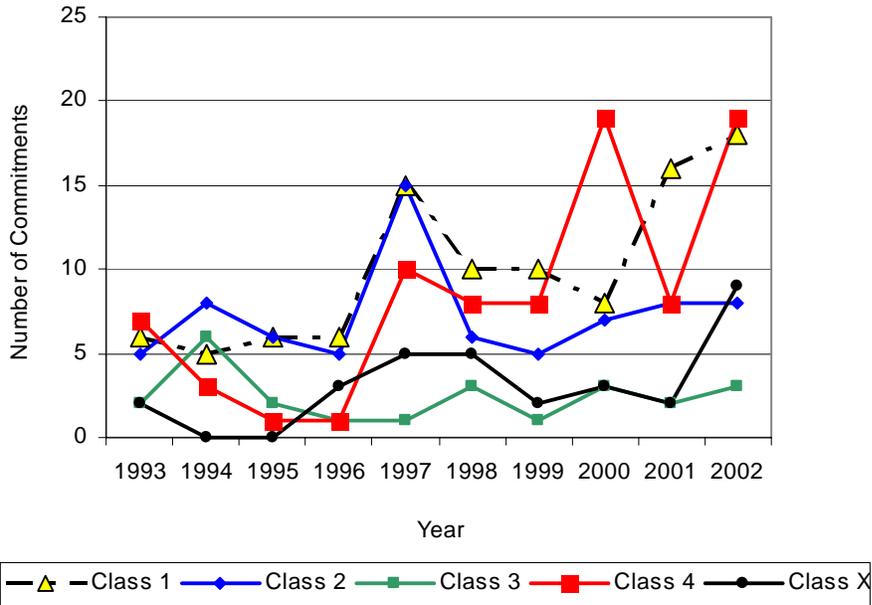


Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

Penalties for drug offenses were also examined between 1993 and 2002. Class 1 felonies accounted for the largest proportion (32 percent) of sentences to IDOC for drug offenses, followed by Class 4 felonies (27 percent), Class 2 felonies (23 percent), Class X felonies (10 percent), and Class 3 felonies (8 percent). Between 1993 and 2002, the number of felons sentenced increased across all class types. Class X sentences increased from two to nine, while the number of Class 1 felonies tripled, from six to 18, and the number of Class 4 felonies increased from seven to 19. Class 2 and Class 3 felony drug offenses increased from five to eight and from two to three, respectively, between 1993 and 2002 (Figure 23).

Figure 23

**Drug Offenders Committed to IDOC from
Vermilion County, by Offense Class**



Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

Between 1993 and 2002, the mean sentence length for Class 1 felonies increased, from 4.8 to 5.9, while the mean sentence length for Class 4 felonies increased slightly, from 2.6 to 2.9 years. Conversely, the mean sentence for a Class X felony decreased 50 percent, from 13.5 to 6.7 years, while the mean sentence length for Class 3 felonies decreased from 5.0 to 3.5 years, and Class 2 sentence lengths slightly, from 4.0 to 3.6 years.

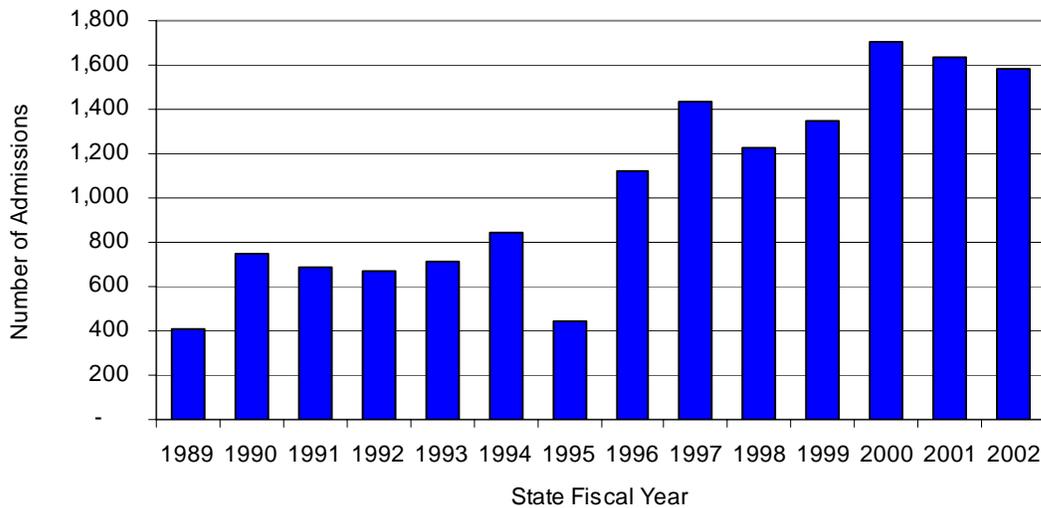
VII. Trends in Drug Treatment Admissions in VEMEG Region by Drug Type

In addition to considering indicators of the extent and nature of drug abuse as reported through the criminal justice system (for example, arrests and prison sentences), there are indicators of substance abuse available from other Illinois social service agencies. Overseeing and supporting treatment for substance users, whether they are referred from the criminal justice system or elsewhere, is the responsibility of the Illinois Department of Human Services' Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (OASA). It is important to note, however, that while OASA data represent the majority of the overall demand for substance abuse treatment in the state, some private programs provide treatment services to a smaller but significant number of clients who may not be included in the state's reporting system.

In state fiscal year 2002, OASA reported 1,585 admissions for alcohol or drug abuse treatment from Vermilion County, compared to the 407 admissions in 1989 (Figure 24). Among the 1,585 admissions to substance abuse treatment in state fiscal year 2002, 41 percent (652) reported alcohol as their primary substance of abuse, while abuse of illicit substances accounted for 49 percent. Three percent reported no primary substance of abuse.

Figure 24

Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions from Vermilion County



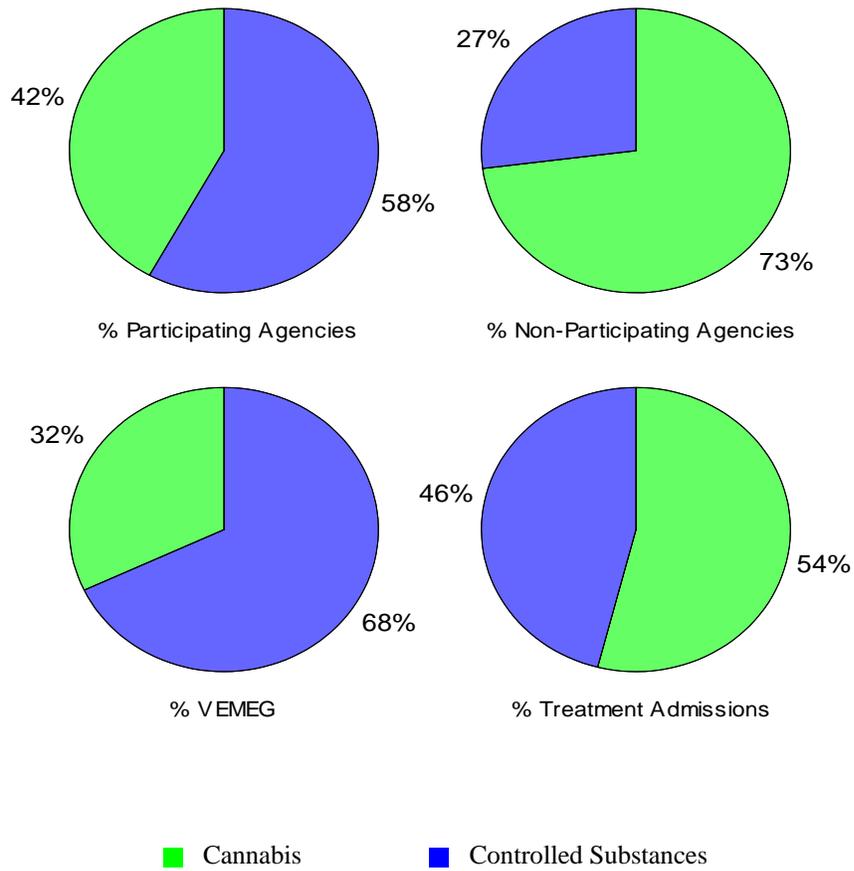
Source: Illinois Department of Human Services' Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse

While drug treatment admissions can be considered a measure of the demand placed on a specific component of the human services system within Illinois, the extent and nature of drug treatment admissions could also be indicative of the substance abuse problem within a particular region. In some respects, the characteristics of those admitted to drug treatment can be considered a profile of the most serious drug abusers in the community, since admission to treatment requires a documented, formal assessment of a drug problem and a level of substance abuse warranting treatment. By comparing the types of drugs of abuse reported by those admitted to substance abuse treatment with the types of drugs involved in law enforcement agency arrests, one can get a sense of the degree to which arrests reflect the drugs which are most problematic within a community.

In the following analyses, the percent of arrests accounted for by drugs classified under Illinois' Controlled Substances Act (primarily cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine) versus the Cannabis Control Act (marijuana) across the participating agencies combined, non-participating agencies combined and VEMEG are compared to the proportion of drug treatment admissions accounted for by these groups of substances. From these comparisons, a number of general conclusions can be made. First, the proportion of arrests made by VEMEG accounted for by drugs other than marijuana (Controlled Substances Act offenses) was higher than the proportion of drug treatment admissions from the covered region accounted for by these substances. However, when compared to the arrests made by both participating and non-participating agencies, the arrests made by VEMEG were closer to the number of individuals admitted for substance abuse for substances other than marijuana. The majority of arrests by non-participating were for cannabis offenses, while controlled substances arrests accounted for the majority of participating agency drug arrests. Unlike the arrests made by non-participating agencies, the arrests made by VEMEG and participating agencies tended to involve substances considered to be the most serious (i.e., felony versus misdemeanor) but not the substances for which a large proportion of community residents were seeking and receiving substance abuse treatment in (Figure 25).

Figure 25

Comparison of Drug Arrests by VEMEG and Participating and Non-participating Agencies vs. Drug Abuse Treatment Admissions in Vermilion County, 2002



Source: Illinois Department of Human Service's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse and VEMEG

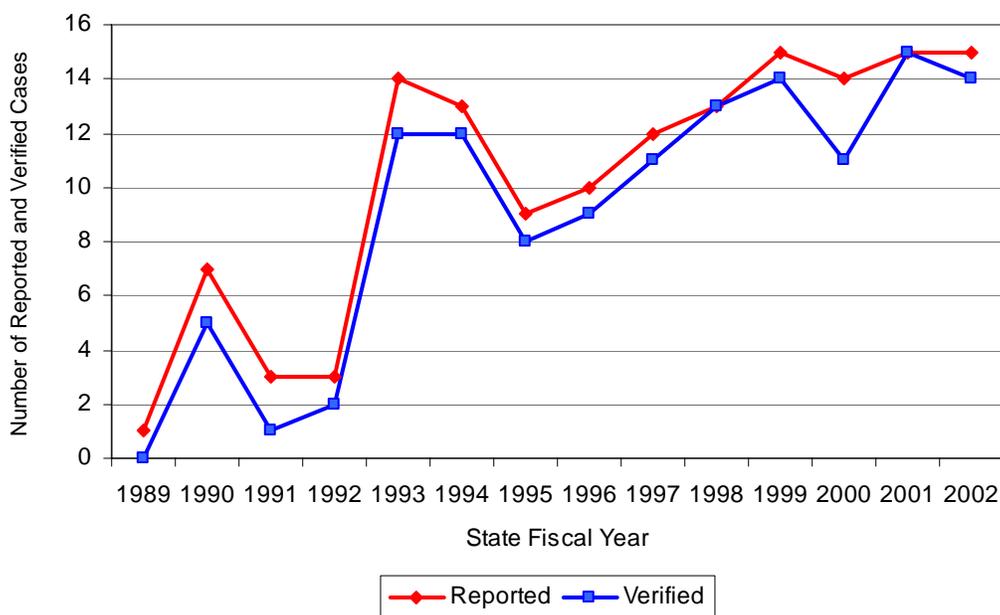
VIII. Trends in Substance-Exposed Infants

Illinois continues to experience the effects of prenatal substance abuse. In Illinois, if a baby is born and thought to have been exposed to illegal substances or alcohol, either through observation by physicians or toxicology tests, the case is reported to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. These cases are then investigated by DCFS to verify the child's prenatal exposure to either alcohol or illegal substances. Between state fiscal years 1989 and 2002, 96 of Illinois' 102 counties reported at least one case of a substance-exposed infant.

Between state fiscal years 1989 and 2002, the number of substance-exposed infants reported in the region covered by VEMEG increased from one reported case to 15 reported cases, with the largest increase occurring between state fiscal years 1992 and 1993. Between state fiscal years 1989 and 2002, 88 percent of all cases reported, were verified as involving prenatal drug use by a DCFS investigation. Mirroring the trend of reported cases, verified cases of substance-exposed infants in the VEMEG region also increased between 1989 and 2002 from zero to 14 (Figure 26).

Figure 26

Cases of Substance-Exposed Births in Vermilion County



Source: Department of Children and Family Services

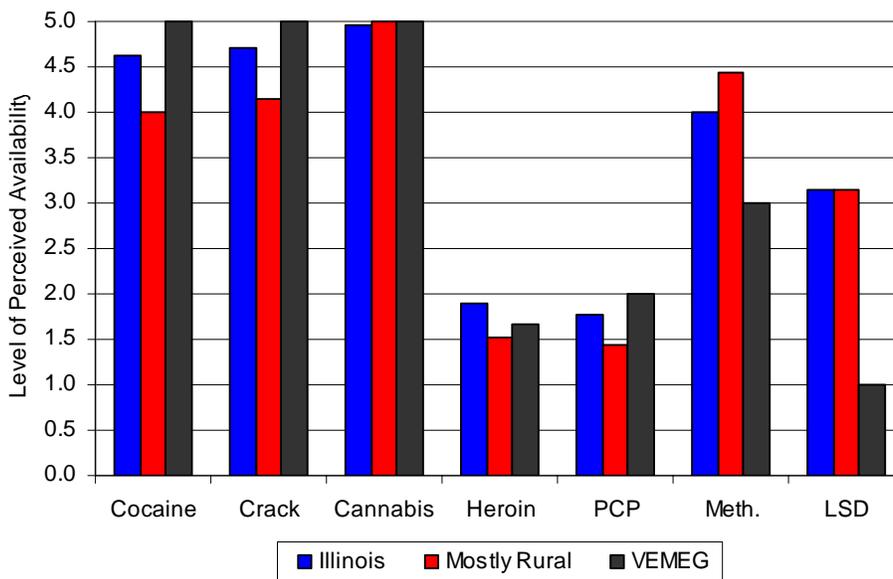
IX. Summary of Drug Situation

Although the distribution of illegal drugs is difficult to measure precisely, data obtained from criminal justice sources can be helpful in estimating drug availability. Information from a recent survey of Illinois drug enforcement units, as well as the most up-to-date data available on drug price, are presented as indicators of the drug supply in Illinois.

The Authority periodically conducts a survey of each MEG and task force in Illinois (the most recent being conducted in 2000) to gauge the perceived availability of drugs in the areas they cover. Questions were asked concerning the availability of specific drugs, and results were analyzed by region of the state. MEGs and task forces are classified as being either mostly urban, mostly rural, or mixed urban/rural based upon the classification of the county(s) that each unit covers, and, for purposes of this report, are compared to the average of similar units.

According to survey responses, cannabis, cocaine, and crack continued to be the most visible drugs on the street and were all reported to be “readily available” across all regions analyzed. Although perceived availability of all the drug types examine remained relatively unchanged across Illinois and other MEGs and task forces in mostly rural regions, the perceived availability increased slightly, since the 1998 survey, in the region covered by VEMEG. Both methamphetamine and LSD were reported as moderately available across all areas that were examined, while PCP and heroin were perceived to be available to a lesser degree. However, the perceived availability of cocaine and crack was slightly greater in the region covered by VEMEG and statewide (Figure 27).

Figure 27
Availability of Drugs in Illinois, 2000
1=Not Available 5=Easily Available



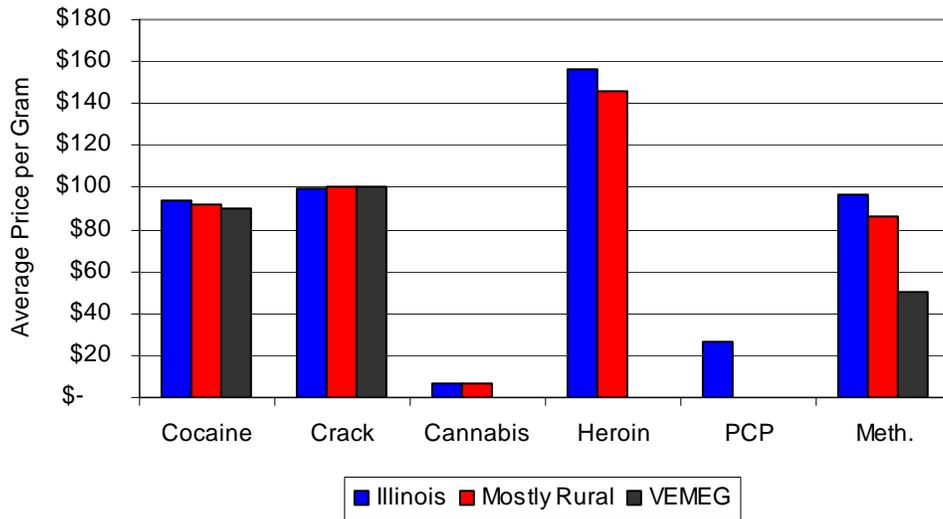
Source: Authority Survey of Illinois MEGs and task forces

Another market indicator that can be used to assess availability is drug price. Lower prices tend to suggest a sufficient supply to meet demand, while increasing prices indicate decreased availability.

Based on a statewide survey of MEG and task force units, the change in the average price of all the drugs examined between 1998 and 2000, varied across all regions surveyed. The reported 2000 average prices of cocaine and crack were relatively stable across all regions. In 2000, the average price of cannabis was \$6 statewide and across all MEGs and task forces in the mostly rural regions; however, the average price of cannabis was not reported by VEMEG. Conversely, the average price of methamphetamine varied significantly across the regions examined. The average price of methamphetamine statewide was \$97 per gram, compared to \$87 per gram in mostly rural regions and \$50 per gram in the region covered by VEMEG.

Figure 28

Price Per Gram in Illinois, 2000

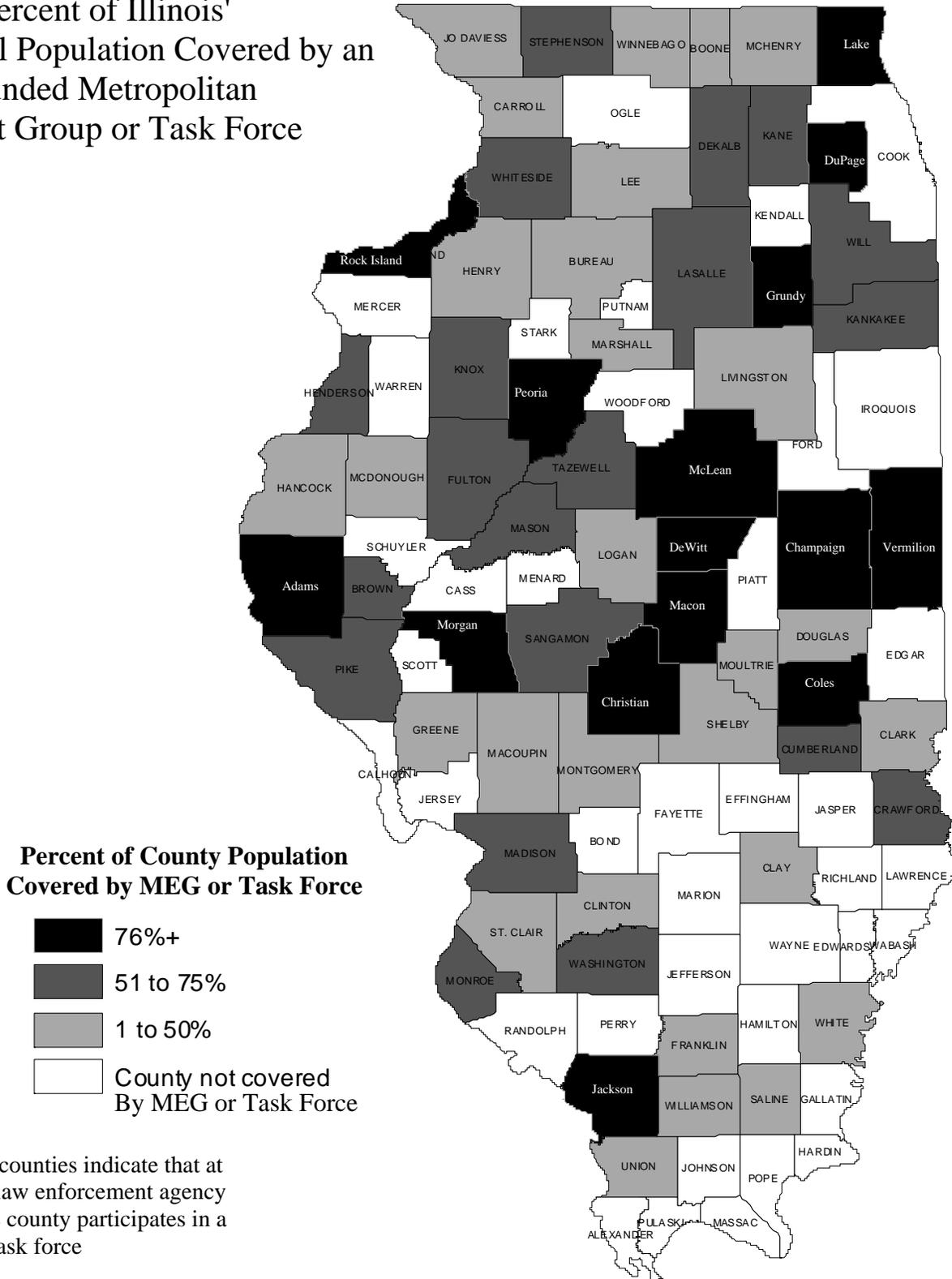


Source: Authority Survey of Illinois MEGs and task forces

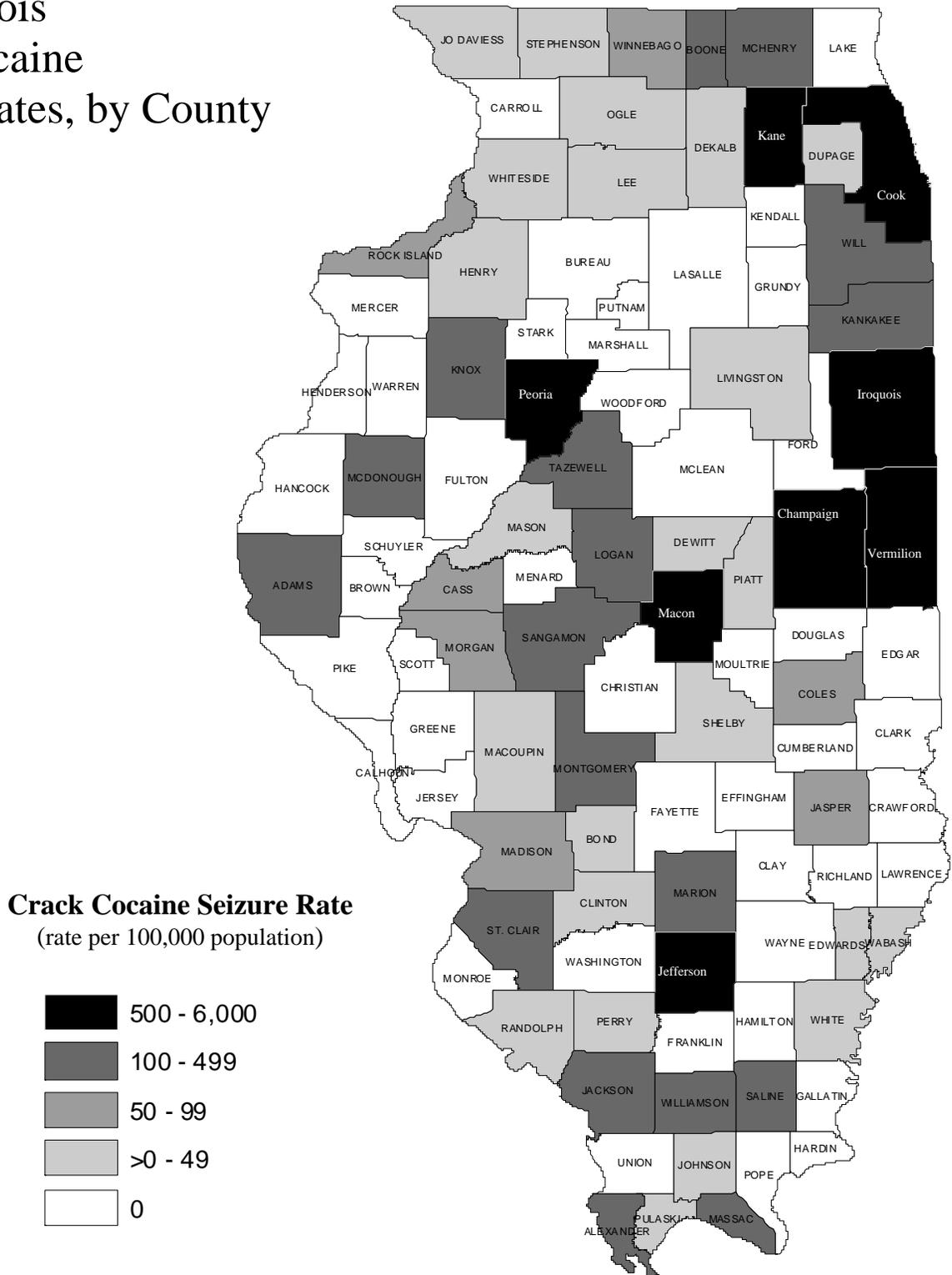
X. Appendices

Map 1

SFY 2002 Percent of Illinois' County-level Population Covered by an Authority-funded Metropolitan Enforcement Group or Task Force

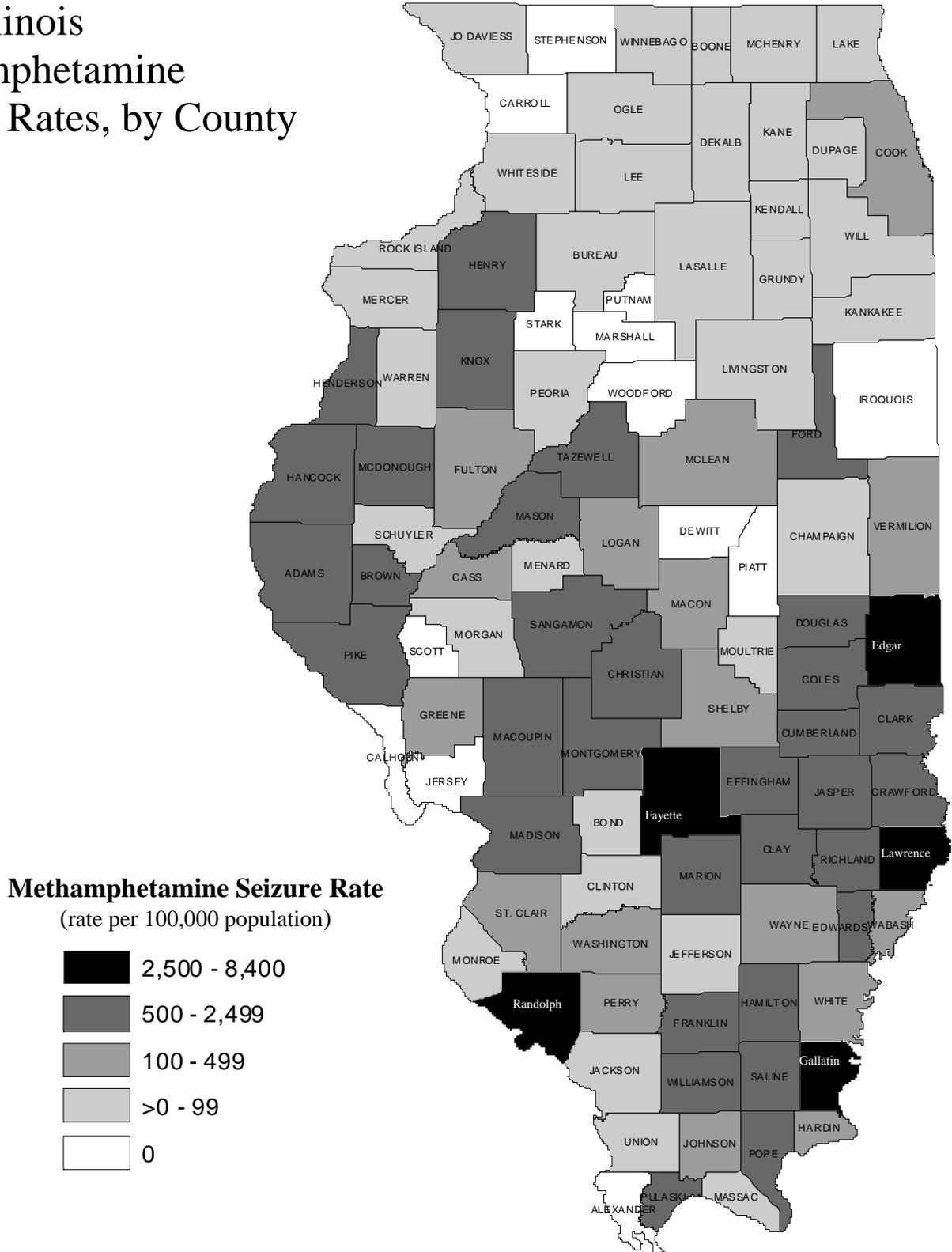


2002 Illinois Crack Cocaine Seizure Rates, by County



Map 5

2002 Illinois Methamphetamine Seizure Rates, by County



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ICJIA

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Telephone: 312-793-8550
TDD: 312-793-4170
Fax: 312-793-8422
www.icjia.state.il.us



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